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Maths for the Mystified

An exploration of the history of mathematics and its relationship to modern-day science and computing.

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This book claims to help people analyse real-world problems with more confidence, how to utilise the mathematics they have learned in order to be better equipped to cope with problems they encounter outside of mathematics lessons.

The first section sets the tone in opening a discussion about the general public's fear of mathematics and lack of understanding of mathematics and statistics. From this introduction we move on to take a careful look at notation, ensuring the reader is clear about the way that we write numbers, dates, algebra and so forth. It is carefully written and should help even the most reluctant mathematician have a better understanding of the language of mathematics. Even complex aspects of mathematics such as vectors and matrices are explained well. We are led through explanations about measurements, times, number groups, data and dimensions – giving good practical examples of many of the concepts involved.

The second section of the book looks at experimental and computational mathematics. From Credit card security, to world mapping to population growth the examples are thoroughly well explained and clear to follow. Clear illustrations aid the explanations at all times. Examples of computerised mathematics are given in Maple and Excel and the user is encouraged to have a pencil and paper handy to solve some of the problems in the chapter as the book unfolds.

The final section gives details of a wide range of interesting numbers and number sequences.

In places the algebra is presented like words in a line of text which makes the fractions a little hard to read, but perhaps the overall effect is less daunting than to repeatedly present the equations on their own line. I was a little distracted by the computer-driven examples in places.

This is a very interesting book with many excellent illustrations of mathematics in practice. It is pitched at quite a high level and would probably be of interest to our sixth form students. These students are more likely to be adept computer users and keen to put their mathematics in practice.

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